

Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company Building
1015 East Main Street
Richmond
Virginia

HABS No. VA-845

HABS
VA
44-RICH
94-

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

VIRGINIA FIRE AND MARINE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING

HABS
VA
44-RICH
94.

Location: 1015 East Main Street, Richmond, Virginia

Present Owner: Branch Patteson, c/o Kingsland Land Company

Present Occupant: Branch and Company

Present Use: Stock Brokerage firm

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Statement of Significance: Retaining its original facade intact, this building is another splendid example of Richmond commercial architecture in the period after the War between the States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: c. 1866.
2. Architect: George H. Johnson (see Item C below)
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1861 Bank of Virginia by James Caskie, President, to Henry Exall on 1 January. On 12 April of that year, Henry Exall and Aramenta A. Exall, his wife, conveyed the brick tenement he purchased from the Bank of Virginia for \$25,000 to the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company (D.B. 76A, 583).

1865 The building on the lot, which had originally been the home of James Caskie, President of the neighboring Bank of Virginia, was destroyed by fire during the evacuation of Richmond.

1869 By 1869 the present building at 1015 East Main Street was built and the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company was occupying the "company's building" at that address (Richmond City Directories).

1953 Patteson Branch et als purchased 1015 East Main Street from Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company for \$28,000 (D.B. 552C, 178).

4. Original plans and construction: The cast-iron front was manufactured by Hayward Bartlett & Co. of Baltimore. A great deal of material on the construction is in a ledger on file with the current (1969) occupants. (Reproduced in Lee, A. C., Architectural Ironwork on Main Street, Richmond, Va. See Item C).

44 RICH
94.

5. Alterations and additions: See Part 11.
- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The building at 1015 East Main Street has served as the headquarters of two well-known Virginia companies: the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company and Branch and Company.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: None.
2. Primary and unpublished sources: Deed Books and tax assessor records in Richmond City Hall. Lee, A. C. Architectural Ironwork on Main Street, Richmond, VA. (M. A. Thesis, School of Architecture, University of Virginia)

Prepared by J. R. Fishburne, Jr.
Research Historian
11 April 1969

PART 11. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The structure is an exceptionally fine example of the post-Civil War iron-fronted commercial buildings. Its free-standing arcade on the street level is a most unusual and successfully handled feature. The building is well maintained by its present owner although modernization of the first two floors has deprived the building of its original interior features there.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 26 feet wide x 140 feet deep. Facade: Two stories, four-bay front.
2. Foundations: Brick, common bond.
3. Wall construction: Cast-iron facade; side and rear walls are brick laid in common bond.
4. Framing: Heavy, closely spaced joists set in the brick side walls.

5. Porches: The street-level portion of the facade consists of a four-bay arcade composed of free-standing Corinthian columns on pedestals, supporting semi-circular arches. The arcade forms a screen across a split in levels in the lower portion of the building. In the westernmost bay of the arcade a flight of steps ascends to the door of the first floor, while in the other three bays steps descend to the area and to the entrance to the lower level. Behind the arcade, the arch motif is repeated in the bays of the first floor. Generally those decorative architectural features which form the front wall of the first floor and the lower level are executed in wood, while those of the arcade itself are in cast iron.
6. Chimneys: The chimney flues are set in the side walls. As the chimneys themselves are not visible from the ground level, they serve no decorative function.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The entrance to the first floor is in the westernmost bay behind the arcade. It is flanked by Corinthian pilasters and is topped by a semi-circular single-pane transom. The double doors are original and each features a long glass panel over a decorative wood panel. The entrance to the lower level in the area is flanked by Doric pilasters and is topped by a rectangular single-pane transom. The lower level rear entrance of the building is not treated architecturally.
 - b. Windows: The first level of the building, as explained, consists of a free-standing arcade behind which are the openings of the lower level and the first floor. This arcade supports a full Corinthian entablature which forms the pedestal base of the second floor. The four bays of the second floor are separated by a single engaged Corinthian column with Corinthian pilasters at the edges of the facade. The windows are four-over-four panes with semi-circular pane tops. A decorative key-stone tops each of these arched windows. The engaged columns of the second floor support an engaged balustrade which forms the pedestal for the engaged columns between the bays of the third floor. The third-floor openings are treated in a similar fashion to those of the second. The space between the third and fourth floor is also in the form of an engaged balustrade. The fourth-floor windows form an arcade with the arches supported on Corinthian columns.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Shed roof with a very shallow slope towards the rear of the building. Roof originally covered with tin.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Crowning the facade is a large full Corinthian entablature with a relatively thin architrave and a wide frieze. The frieze is ornamented with four rosettes. The cornice features modillions, dentils and eggs.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Side stair hall entered from the exterior gives access to the main office on the first floor. The first floor has been greatly altered and no original woodwork save that of the stair hall survives. Original plan probably consisted of two main rooms, behind which was an open court which separated the main block of the building from a one-story-on-high-basement structure that probably housed living quarters. This rear structure was originally connected to the main structure by an open gallery. The court has been enclosed and all of this space has been converted into modern offices.
 - b. Second floor: Three principal rooms, one behind another but altered into modern offices.
 - c. Third floor: One very large room, and one lesser room behind, which has been partitioned into two rooms. This floor has been little altered but is in poor condition.
 - d. Fourth floor: This floor has a similar arrangement and is in similar condition to the third floor.
 - e. Lower level: Plan greatly altered and modernized; there is a sub basement beneath this level.
2. Stairways: The one original stairway in the building ascends in single runs between each floor. No balustrade between the first and second floors; the handrail is supported on iron brackets. From the second floor up, the stairs have simple, turned balusters with a broad handrail typical of the period.

3. Flooring: Original wide-board hardwood flooring survives on the third and fourth floors. Floors in remaining parts of the building are covered with a variety of modern materials.
4. Walls and ceilings: Original plaster walls and ceilings survive on the third and fourth floors.
5. Doorways and doors: Original four-panel oak-grained doors and double sliding doors survive on the third and fourth floors.
6. Decorative features and trim: Simple original baseboards on the third and fourth floors. Several original black and gold composition marbelized mantels of simple form survive on the third and fourth floors.
7. Notable hardware: Some original iron locks with white china or Bennington knobs survive on doors on the second, third and fourth floors.
8. Lighting: Electric; some original gas jets survive on the third and fourth floors.
9. Heating: Building originally heated by open fires; presently it is heated by a modern oil-fired furnace with hot air ducts.

D. Site:

General setting and orientation: The structure stands on the south side of lower Main Street in line with the other commercial buildings on the block. It is flanked on the west side by another fine iron-fronted structure of similar type, scale and period, and on the east by a stucco-fronted building with cast-iron decoration, also of similar type, scale and period.

Prepared by Calder C. Loth
Architectural Historian
Virginia Historic Landmarks
Commission
15 April 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the Richmond Photo-Data Project, undertaken in 1967 by HABS in cooperation with the Virginia Historic Landmarks

Commission. During the period from July, 1967 to October, 1969, records were made of 11 historic structures in Richmond. The project primarily recorded examples of the cast-iron commercial architecture for which the city is known, though other building types are also included.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. James W. Moody, Jr., Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, directed the operation in Richmond. Professor Paul Delaney of the University of Virginia School of Architecture assisted in the selection of subjects covered. Historical and architectural data were furnished by Messrs. Tucker Hill and Calder Loth, Architectural Historians of the Commission's staff. Photographer was Edward F. Heite, also on the staff of the Commission.

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

Addendum to:
Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company
1015 East Main Street
Richmond
Virginia

HABS No. VA-845

HABS
VA,
44-RICH,
94-

PHOTOGRAPH

HistoricAmerican Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127